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LOVE, COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

A POETICAL SATIRE,

BY

OCTAVIUS.

NEWARK, N. J.:
F. C. BLISS & CO., PUBLISHERS.

THE NAUGHTY MAN;

OR,

SIR THOMAS BROWN.

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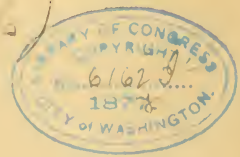
(Frank C. Bliss)



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THE NAUGHTY MAN;

OR,

SIR THOMAS BROWN.

I.

LESSONS we learn from what we daily see
Of good or evil, if philosophy,
Based on those great *First Truths*,
will hold the mind
Within its limits—happiness to find.
Those great *First Truths* will teach the human
soul
That the equator lies not at the pole,

That man before his own nose cannot walk,
That man without his palate cannot talk;
That gravitation tends not to the sky,
But to Earth's center, should he try to fly.

II.

Much of delusion mixed with truth we find,
Strange whims, and twinings in the human mind;

Delusions, fictions, foibles, glittering lies,
Frescoed with truth, seem real as the skies.
At the same table, sitting side by side,
Oft we do see Humility and Pride,
Wit, Genius, Learning, the great man of law,
In social converse with the man of straw.
Extremes oft meet around the festive board,
An honest beggar and a thieving lord;

Jew, Gentile, Greek, will with the Christian sit,
Say grace, or not — it matters not a whit;
They pass the time most pleasantly away,
But cheat each other on the coming day.
The rich, the poor, the freeman and the slave,
The noble monarch and the princely knave,
Are onward floating with the ebbing tide
Down the great stream of life — on every side
Dangers beset — on the storm-beaten coast
Are wreck'd together — in the grave are lost.

III.

If life is but gas, as some *savants* say,
Or caused by some general harmony,
Or principle inherent in the blood,
Or blood is life itself, as Hunter prov'd,
What matters it? Doctors may disagree
On subjects which concern not you or me.

Most foolish things wise men have oft conceived;
More foolish should we seem if we believed
Their theories; for instance, they did plan
A lofty tower, thus to enable man
To clamber into Heaven. This "Babel"
Seems to us unreal as a fable.
But other "Babels" on the social stage
Men oft have rear'd, e'en in their hoary age,
Thinking therein true happiness to find,
Sharing its joys with some congenial mind.
If love, hope, courage, bind their hearts within,
What care they for their neighbors, kith, or kin?

IV.

Once on a time, not many days ago,
When many taught there was no hell below,

Not in the spring, or lovely month of May,
When birds did sweetly sing, and fields look'd gay,
When flowers were fresh, and opening buds were fair,
When brides look'd lovely—blossoms in their hair;
Oh, no! 'twas the last day of dying year,
A raw, cold winter's day, frosty and clear:
What then took place, permit me to rehearse,
Not in stale prose, but in more lively verse;
And if, perchance, to make complete a rhyme,
Or try to make a jingling couplet chime,
I should speak boldly—but, of course, sincere—
Don't think the truth I utter too severe;
And do not say—"thou little groveling elf,
Turn thine eyes inward—look upon thyself."
Most flattering words from eager lips may fly,
But shall I pause to harmonize a lie?

If, with my pen, I use most comic art,
To 'mend the manners, or reform the heart,
Don't think I do it out of any spite;
Surely! I would not libel one, a mite.
I use fictitious names — the facts I give
In a mild form, to save the sensitive.

V.

In the great city Gotham, near the sea,
Where Queen Fashion rul'd the aristocracy,
Lived the proud millionnaire, Sir Thomas Brown,
With riches enough to purchase a crown;
He had sons, and daughters settled in life,
He was a widower, having no wife,
True! he was old, being now eighty-three,
But managed to get down to breakfast, and tea,
His eyesight grown dim, and shaky his hand,
Of course — needed help to button a band,

In making his toilet — now, pray don't stare —
He wanted some one to comb out his hair,

To brush his new teeth — put on his collar,
To dust off his clothes, and things that follow.

'Tis true! it gave all the children pleasure,
To dust, brush and scrub him without measure.
Now this ancient relic of ages past,
This human caricature, worthy of Nast,
This feeble old man, one foot in the grave.
Inspir'd by Cupid, at once became brave.
So he hobbled around, seeking for Ruth,
And found her a widow, blooming in youth.
A widow! ah, yes! now that was a fact,
Possessing much good sense in the abstract;
Sir Thomas was human! why then complain?
We are all human, in sunshine or rain.

VI.

But who was Ruth? methinks I hear you say.
I'll answer in mine own peculiar way:
Her eyes were sparkling — as brilliant and
bright
As glittering stars in a clear frosty night,

Her head was bedecked with beautiful hair,

Her teeth well preserved — her complexion fair,

With a smiling face — lips red as a cherry,
She would laugh, sing, and chat, ever make merry;
A leader of fashions, lively and gay,
She turned day into night — night into day;
Most fully developed, with full rounded arms,
No wonder frail men were struck with her charms;
In London, Paris, on Italia's soil,
She played all her games according to Hoyle,
She homage received from men of all ranks,
Returned them no love—but simply her thanks.
A pure, spotless virgin, true! she was not,
But a superb widow! without a spot
Or blemish to mar; a Venus in form;
No wonder she took her lovers by storm.

VII.

Now this human fossil, Sir Thomas Brown,
Considered by some a fool, or a clown,

By others — 'mong whom, his children we name —
As "*non compos mentis*," being the same
As out of his head, or out of his mind,
No matter which, for in love we are blind,
Having met Mrs. Ruth as stated before,
He began at once to love and adore.
"Just the thing," quoth he, "for one of my age.
Though friends may laugh and children may rage,
I'll offer my wealth, my heart and my name.
If she but accepts, a nice little game
We'll play upon all; in secret we'll wed,
Regardless of others — no matter what's said."
Strange things have happened, stranger to relate,
How she, this buxom widow, as by fate,
Selected this old man to be her mate.

If Cupid does go with bows and arrows,
If Venus does keep her coach and sparrows
As some poets say, while others quibble.—
Surely ! these things help to explain the riddle.
Not he who cannot love, but he who can,
Shows the kind heart, and proves himself a man.

VIII.

I need not tell how this Sir Thomas Brown,
Made love to this lady of great renown,
And offer'd this sweet and beautiful dame
In accents most tender, his heart and name;
How he was accepted, and on said day—
The last of the year, he led her away
To the Altar—the twain became one,
In spite of his children, daughter and son.
'Twas nicely arranged, 'twas secretly planned—
The bride—she looked sweet, the groom—he looked bland.

No maids, no groomsmen attended them there,
The Priest tied the knot with his usual care.
Now married — they went at once to her home,
For she lived in style, and almost alone,
With servants, 'tis true — perhaps half-a-score,
Including the one who guarded the door;
And there for weeks, they in quiet remained,
For seeking seclusion, cannot be blamed,
He, now being blessed with a charming wife,
She, to his comfort devoting her life;
They laughed, and joked, and cut their capers,
As they read together the morning papers.

IX.

These papers, of course, were filled with the fun —
The *Tribune*, the *World*, the *Times* and the *Sun*,
Each gave to the facts a different hue,
And each one proclaimed its own statement true;

Their big black bulletins chalked o'er in white,
Gave all the *latest news* from morn till night;
Ofttimes, 'tis true, they made a huge blunder—
They must sell their papers—'tis no wonder!
Plaster and whitewash is the stuff they use—
The pen is but a trowel to abuse.
But why complain? at least 'tis unavailing;
Why, such mistakes are but reporter's failing;
If they won't fib what bounty can they crave?
We pay for what we want—not what we have.

X.

Like whirlwinds disturbing a night's repose,
Came whispered breathings; then loud cries arose,
Some boldly cursed this matrimonial life,
Some cursed the old man, and some cursed
the wife.
As ancient Hero's are renown'd in song
For rescuing virtue from the oppressor's wrong,

So let these stand on the historic page
As the great living bombasts of the age:

In the great sermons they do daily preach,
In the great lessons they do daily teach,
They ring the faults of others — not their own,
They growl and snarl like a dog with his bone;

They villify others — glorify self,
Ofttimes they do it for mere worldly pelf;
They weep and groan with apparent sorrow,
At things they will do themselves on the
morrow.
Like crested snake in Afric's sunny vales,
Which shifts its skin, throws off its tarnished
scales,
So will they change their colors — seem more
young,
But carry poisonous venom in each tongue.

XI.

The nearest of kin and expectant heirs,
Still hoping to hold the estate as theirs
By hook or crook — it mattered not how —
Before the golden-calf ready to bow,
At once they declared the "old man" insane,
That the widow had acted simply for gain —

A clear case of fraud! she took him by stealth.
Expecting thereby to seize his great wealth:
A "*particeps criminis*," so they said —
A divorce must be had from board and bed.
They rushed into law, deep vengeance they swore,
Produced affidavits — a dozen or more;
Applied for a *Writ*, which you well know
Is called "*De Lunatico Inquirendo*,"
But how to serve it — that was the question;
They could not get into the lady's mansion,
For the color'd porter at window stood,
With a shining face, in a laughing mood,
And to the question, "Is Mr. Brown at home?"
Would reply, "Mr. and Misses are gone
On a southern tour;" then, with twinkling eye,
Would smilingly add, "They'll be home by and by."

XII.

But the *Writ* was served by an authorized mode —
Not "personal," but as prescribed by the "Code;"
Commissioners appointed, one, two and three,
In matters *ex-parte* must surely agree.
But now he displayed both wisdom and pluck,
His head was all right, and so was his luck;
Sir Thomas appeared in a legalized way,
By Counsel appeared, and presented a "*Stay*,"
An "*Order of Court*," which all must abide,
The first step to set all proceedings aside.
He said to his lawyer, a man of renown,
"I'll show them I'm neither a fool or a clown.
They swore I was crazy, and out of my mind,
An old dotard they called me — lame, halt, and blind;

They shall take it all back! a stroke of my pen
Shall force them to cry out Amen! and Amen!
Having conquered thus far, possessing my wife,
I'll heal up old sores — prevent further strife;
Matters now doubtful, shall by law be made plain,
My children no longer shall curse, or complain.
So sit down at once — do all in your power,
To have this my '*Last Will*' complete in an hour;
The words I will dictate to you, my dear friend,
Your wisdom and judgment, I trust, will commend."

XIII.

Last Will and Testament of Sir Thomas Brown,
Signed, witnessed, and sealed — it was all written down

By his dear friend, the lawyer of great renown.

'Mong his sons, who had boldly pronounced
him insane;
'Mong his daughters, who called him foolish
and vain;
'Mong his heirs, who greatly embittered the
strife
By coarsely defaming his beautiful wife;

He gave, and bequeathed (calling each one by name),
In trust—nevertheless, for the use of the same,
Nearly all of his wealth, and princely estate.
How much was reserved, it is needless to state.
Unselfish act! Such acts are never seen
Performed by men controll'd by hate, or spleen,
Which, like the adder's venom—viper's breath—
Are but the obnoxious messengers of death.
Unselfish act! And that stroke of his pen,
Forced his children to cry Amen! and Amen;
Admit he was sane when he made his *Last Will*,
If then he was sane, he must be so still,
And if so still — for a moment consider,
Was he not sane when he married the widow?
Respecting his wife, who took him by stealth,
As some boldly say, to obtain his great wealth,

How comes it, pray tell me, that in the same hour
He signed the Will, she relinquished her Dower?
His head always level, her heart always true,
Let us wish them God-speed, and bid them adieu.

XIV.

Things are somewhat reversed, when wisdom and age
Are counted as nothing—as fools on the stage;
If a man wants to marry—strange as it seems—
Must he ask his dear children, still in their teens?
Must he say to them, "Children, *please, may I marry?*"
And if they refuse, should he raise the Old Harry?

If a widow would marry — sometimes the case —
Must she call in the neighbors as a preface,
And ask their consent that she wed Mr. Brown,
Or be laughed at — defamed, throughout the town?
We will not attempt at this time to relate,
The dangers attending the marital state —

A good loving husband, with a virtuous wife
Of course, will augment all the joys of life;
From this stated axiom we cannot fly,
For this self-evident truth, is not a lie.
If Wedlock's a lottery, as some maintain,
Then some will be losers, and some will gain;
If trusting to fate, or trusting to chance,
Powerless to act, as in nightmare or trance —
You marry a rake, or marry a shrew,
The blame must be laid, as it should be, on you.

For he is a fool deserving of pains,
Who marries without consulting his brains;
The brains and heart must work together,
If you would sail through life in cloudless
weather.

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